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THE CHRIST OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE LIGHT OF RELIGIO-HIS- TORICAL CRITICISM.¹

IV.

CHRIST AS CONQUEROR OF DEATH AND BRINGER OF LIFE.

TO the faithful believer, Christ is the Saviour because he conquered Death and Hell (Hades), deprived death of its power, and brought life and incorruption to light. (1 Cor. xv. 55 ff., 2 Tim. i. 10.)

In order to understand this belief in its original and actual significance, we must take into consideration that for the ancients death was not a natural occurrence, but the result of supernatural causes. Either an angry god decreed death as a punishment, (as befell the whole human race after the fall of Adam, Rom. v. 12 ff.) or else demoniac powers tainted men with the destructive poison of sickness and sin, thus bringing them into the power of Death, who as a ruler of the underworld keeps souls imprisoned in his dungeon.

Consequently deliverance from death is accomplished in three ways: the son of God reconciles sinful mankind with God by the atonement of his vicarious death, thus redeeming them from the curse of the law which condemns them, and restoring them to the favor of God (Rom. iii. 24 f., 2 Cor. v. 19 ff., Gal. i. 4, iii. 13); or he cleanses them from the demon's taint of sin and death by the purifying power of his sacred blood (Heb. ix. 11 ff., x. 14, xxii. 29);

¹ Translated from the original manuscript by Prof. W. H. Carruth, University of Kansas.

or again, by his own death and resurrection he wrested from the dictator of death, the devil, and from the evil spirits, their power over mankind (Heb. ii. 14, Coloss. ii. 15, i. 13 f., 1 John iii. 8).

According to the first and second views, the resurrection of Christ is the divine recognition of the atoning and purifying effect of his death (Rom. iv. 25); according to the third the resurrection and ascension¹ of Christ is the proof of the victory gained by him over Hades and death, whereby he became the "Prince of Life," possessor, pledge, and mediator of life for us (Acts iii. 15, Rev. i. 18, John xi. 25, iii. 13 ff., 1 Peter iii. 18 ff.).

The means by which Christ, being raised up, imparts his life to his followers, are (1) belief in his name, which includes confessing and calling upon it (Rom. x. 9 ff., John iii. 15 ff., xx. 31, xvi. 23 f.); (2) baptism in his name (Acts ii. 38), the washing of regeneration (Tit. iii. 5, John iii. 5), mystical purification (1 Cor. vi. 11, Eph. v. 26), the participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. vi. 1 ff.); (3) the eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. x. 16 ff., xi. 23 ff., John vi. 51 ff., Rev. iii. 20, xix. 9).

For all these features of the picture of Christ as Saviour of the world, as we find it in the New Testament, there are many parallels in the history of religion. The belief that the unmerited suffering of the pious is a vicarious atonement for the salvation of sinners, is found for the first time in the prophet of the exile, the Deutero-Isaiah, Chapter liii, and from the time of the Maccabees became dominant in the theology of the Pharisees.

The Hellenistic-Judaic writing known as the fourth book of the Maccabees, represents the dying heroes of the Maccabean period as praying (vi. 29):

"Make my blood a sacrifice of purification and accept my soul as a ransom for theirs (the people's)!"

And in xvii. 22 we read:

¹ The ascension, as the opposite of the "descent into hell," originally the same as the resurrection, both of them expressing the "lifting up" of Christ from the realm of death into Heaven. (Eph. iv. 8 ff.).

"By the blood of those holy men and by the atonement of their death divine Providence has saved Israel."

This conception of a vicarious atonement dominated popular opinion concerning the sacrifice of animals in the religious service among the Jews as well as among heathen nations. On the one hand these were regarded as substitutes in a visible representation of an execution, and in that capacity served as vicarious satisfaction of divine justice, to re-establish the connection that had been broken between the congregation and the deity. On the other hand they served as an effective means of purification, the sacred powers present especially in the flesh and blood of the sacrifice washing away the impurity that prevented communication with the deity.¹

Among the Greeks, too, the services of atonement for reconciling angry gods and spirits, and those of purification for removing infection produced by demons, were frequently identical. Vicarious sacrifices of animals served in both instances, and for special occasions even of human beings, whose death was regarded as sacrificial atonement for the city.²

In Athens, at the spring festival of the Thargelia (in honor of Apollo and Diana) two condemned criminals were led in a solemn procession through the city, and were afterwards stoned or burned to death as expiatory sacrifices. The same ceremony occurred annually at Abdera and at Massilia in times of public calamities. In the Ionic cities of Asia Minor an animal sacrifice was commonly substituted for the human sacrifice, or the slaying of the victim was performed symbolically, being represented by blows with sacred twigs. The substitution of the animal sacrifice for the human is easily recognized in the stories of the offering up of Isaac by Abraham and Iphigenia by Agamemnon. But this substitution was not practiced by all the heathen Semites. Even at the time of the Kings of Israel, the Canaanites, as is well known, sacrificed their first-born as burnt-offerings to Moloch, and down to the time of Jeremiah the prophets had to contend constantly with the ineradi-

¹ W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites*.

² Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 247 f., 366 f.; Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, III, 125 f., II, 39 ff.

cable tendency on the part of the Israelites toward similar heathen aominations. This proves how deeply the notion of the necessity for human sacrificial atonement was rooted in Semitic religion. Moreover, the sacrifice was regarded as the more effective, the more the life offered up was of high rank and value.

Philo of Byblus¹ tells us that it was an old custom for the ruler of a city or of a people, in times of great danger, to give up his beloved son as a vicarious sacrifice to the evil spirits for the whole people, and the children thus sacrificed were put to death with mystical rites.

An instance of such a sacrifice of a king's son is recorded concerning the king of Moab in 2 Kings iii. 27. We are told of the Carthaginians that they attributed their defeat and the siege of their city by Agathocles (308 B. C.) to the wrath of Baal, because for some time the sacrifice of the children of noble families had been replaced by that of the children of slaves. Consequently they decided to reconcile their god by throwing a hundred children of the noblest families into the fiery throat of his brazen image, and this number was increased by three hundred voluntary sacrifices in addition.² This horrible practice was still secretly kept up among the Carthaginians even at the time of Tertullian,³ in spite of all the endeavors of the Roman authorities to suppress it.

This opinion that the sacrifice of royal children is especially efficacious, is connected with time-honored belief of the Orient in the incarnation of the deity in kings. In such cases, therefore, it is a divine or semi-divine life that is offered up to the deity, and this leads us to the fundamental idea of the dying and resurrected god, which was the basis of the mysteries. In its original form it is one of the earliest factors in religious legends and customs, and is due to the annual dying off of the vegetation in the fall, and its renewed life in the spring. Childish imagination everywhere looked upon these natural processes as the fate of the spirits and deities that work in nature, and gave expression to this view in correspond-

¹ According to Eusebius, *Praepar. evang.*, IV. 16. (156 d).

² Diodorus, XX, 14.

³ Apologeticus, 6.

ing acts of worship, indicative of sorrow or of joy. These acts of worship, however, were not merely symbols, but were intended to be at the same time magic means for averting the threatened annual destruction of the divine life in nature, and for assisting in its victorious resurrection.

Survivals of this primitive belief are to be found almost everywhere in the form of popular customs, such as the driving out of winter and death in the spring-festivals of the May-queen, or in the harvest-festivals of the "corn-mother" or the "maiden," the personification of the corn-demon, and other similar celebrations. From these universally diffused primitive conceptions and customs there were developed among the nations of Asia Minor, Egypt, and Greece more distinctive myths of the death and return of a god, whose former life was represented by the rites of every recurring yearly celebration. With increasing culture, anxiety for the preservation of the life of nature was overshadowed by the need of a guarantee for the preservation of individual life after death. Then these myths and rites, dealing originally only with the annual death and revival of vegetation, or of the indwelling spirits and deities, became the symbols and mystic means of the mysteries guaranteeing to the initiates future life.

The Egyptian Isis-mysteries were based upon the myth of Osiris, originally a god of vegetation. Osiris was killed by his brother Set, the demon of the parching summer-heat, and afterward ruled the underworld as king and judge of the dead, but lived again on earth in his son Horus, who avenged his death upon Set, his enemy. This myth was commemorated by a religious drama at the autumnal celebration the seventeenth to the twentieth of Athyr (November), first by a service of mourning on the seventeenth, the day of Osiris's death, then by a festival of joy upon the nineteenth, the third day after his death, when the body of Osiris was found again by Isis, his sister and wife.² In a similar manner

¹ A profusion of further particulars is to be found in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, II., Chapter 3, §§ 2 ff. The same source is authority for the following statements concerning the mysteries.

² Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, ed. Parthey, chap. 13, 39, and p. 235.

the death of Adonis was commemorated in Byblus at the spring festival by the mourning of women, and on the next day his resurrection and ascension to heaven was celebrated with rejoicing.¹

According to another legend, Adonis is said, like Persephone, to spend half the year in the underworld, and the other half on this upper world with his beloved Aphrodite (Astarte).

The part played by Adonis in Syria, was taken in Phrygia by Attis, the beloved of the "great mother," Cybele. The festival of the vernal equinox, lasting four days, was celebrated in his honor. In this, first the death of the god, the result of his voluntary emasculation, was mourned with dirges and symbolically represented by the priest's making an incision in his own arm, and offering up the flowing blood as a sacrifice, while others by voluntary emasculation entered the ranks of the god's followers.² Then on the fourth day came the "festival of joy," in celebration of the resurrection of the god, when the priest anointed the lips of the mourners with oil, uttering the formula :

"Be glad, ye pious, since the god is saved

We too shall rescue find from our distress!"³

The mysteries of Demeter and Persephone have for their basis substantially the same myth, but in this case the goddess mourns the death of her daughter instead of that of husband or lover. The daughter (who like her mother, Demeter, is the personification of vegetation) was snatched away from the flowers of the meadow by Pluto, the lord of the lower world, was carried down to his realm of shadows and sought by her mother everywhere on land and sea. Then, because the grief of the goddess checked the fruitfulness of all vegetation on earth, threatening to produce a universal famine, the daughter was restored to her mother by the behest of Jove with the stipulation that she should remain half the year with her husband in the lower world and the other half with her mother

¹ Lucian, *De dea Syra*, 6.

² Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, X, 1061-1075.

³ Firmicus Maternus, *De errore prof. rel.*, chap. 3, 22.

in the upper world. The dramatic representation of this story of the two goddesses, especially of Demeter's search and lamentation, were the subject matter of the Eleusinian mysteries. Doubtless the original purpose of these mysteries was merely the preservation and fostering of the fertility of nature by means of the magic symbolism of the ceremonials; but later, under the influence of guaranteeing to the initiates a happy future existence.¹

Dionysos, like Osiris, with whom the Greeks frankly identify him,² is among the nature-gods, whose violent death, dismemberment and subsequent resurrection were recounted in legends of varying forms, and represented in corresponding mystic rites. Among these rites was that of the dismemberment of the god, in which the worshippers tore the flesh of a steer with their teeth and consumed the bloody flesh in order to become thereby participants in the imperishable life of the god, who was incarnate in the steer. In this mystic communion the death and life of the god were constantly renewed and assimilated.³

Closely connected with these legends of the violent death of a deity are those of the voluntary descent of a god or a hero into the lower world and of his safe return. The oldest of these is the Babylonian myth of Istar's descent into hell.⁴ In order to find the water of life, which is to bring back to life her lover Tammuz, the goddess descends into the "land without return." Arriving at the gate of the lower world she peremptorily demands admission of the gate-keeper, threatening, in case of refusal, to force the gates open and to lead back to the upper world all the spirits imprisoned within. Reluctantly the mistress of the underworld permits her entrance, "according to the ancient laws," that is, at each of the seven gates a portion of her clothing is taken from her so that she

¹ Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profan. religionum*, chap. 7. Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 146. Ovid, *Metamorph.*, V., 509-571.

² Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, chap. 35. Firmicus Maternus, *De errore prof. relig.*, chap. 6.

³ Clemens Alex., *Protrept.* I, 12, 17 f. Compare Rohde, *Psyche*, 301 ff., Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, II, 165.

⁴ Schrader, *Höllenfahrt der Istar*, also *Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, second edition, 561 ff.

finally enters the underworld quite naked, is there immediately put behind lock and key and is attacked by sixty diseases.

But since the removal of the goddess of fertility threatened to put an end to all propagation of men and beasts on earth and to bring on universal death (Compare the same thought in the Demeter legend, *ante* p. 677), the supreme god, Ea, created the hero Assusunamir and sent him to the underworld to liberate Istar. At the command of the messenger of the gods the mistress of the underworld releases the captive goddess, has her sprinkled with the water of life and at each of the seven gates through which she has to pass on her return one of her garments is given back to her. The poem seems to close then with the account of how the lover of Istar, Tammuz, is washed with the water of life, anointed with oil and thus recalled to life, whereupon the lamentation passes over into the playing of flutes accompanied by the shouts and games of those taking part in the ceremonies, evidently a description of the same rites of a spring festival as were performed in honor of Osiris, Adonis, Attis, Demeter, and Persephone.

The nearest relationship to this Babylonian myth of a descent into hell is one found among the Mandæans, a Judæo-Babylonian sect. Here the divine hero, Hibil-Ziwa, is called into existence to the end that he may descend into the underworld, overcome the dragon of darkness, shut the princess of hell into prison, and liberate and lead back to the world of light the good spirits there detained.¹ What Istar merely threatened in the myth just cited: to burst the gates of the underworld and lead forth the dead, is actually accomplished by the divinely appointed messenger Hibil-Ziwa on behalf of the good spirits. Thus this Mandæan myth constitutes the transition stage from the pagan to the Gnostic-Christian conceptions of the same sort.

In the hymn of the Naassene (Ophitic) Gnostics² the manifold distresses of the human soul are for the first time portrayed as it wanders about in the labyrinth of earthly life, unable to find the

¹ Brandt, *Die mandäische Religion*, p. 213 ff., 191.

² Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, V, 11.

exit. Therefore, the hymn proceeds, the celestial saviour-spirit Christ prayed to his father: "Send me! In possession of the seals I will go down, will wander through all æons, disclose all secrets, make known the figures of the gods, and impart the hidden features of the sacred way, called 'Gnosis.'" According to the Gnostic conception, then, salvation consists in the descent of the heavenly Christ-spirit into all the realm of earth, liberating the souls held captive by the (earthly and infernal) powers that are hostile to God, by means of the mysterious knowledge of these powers and the control over them thus acquired. Thus, too, according to the wisdom of the Egyptians, the souls in the netherworld are obliged to protect themselves against the assaults of demoniac powers by the possession and use of mysterious names and formulæ.

From the circles of syncretic Gnosticism the myth of the descent into hell went over into ecclesiastical Christianity. It is found frequently in the apocryphal gospels and acts of the apostles which were widely read in the first Christian centuries. Thus, for instance, in the Gospel of Peter, the resurrected Christ is asked by a heavenly voice: "Hast thou preached obedience to those who sleep in death?" and his answer is "Yes." This indicates that in the interval between his death and his resurrection Christ descended into hell and presented himself before the world of shades as its ruler and master. How important this thought was to primitive Christians, and how earnestly they boasted of this particular superiority of the Christian faith over the kindred mysteries of paganism is shown by the eloquent disquisition of the old apologete and polemic Firmicus Maternus: While in the case of the pagan divinities only their death is known but their resurrection is neither prophesied nor attested by eye-witnesses, on the other hand the Son of God accomplished what he promised in advance, "he closed the gates of the infernal regions and broke the spell of the harsh law of death; in three days¹ he assembled together the host of the just that

¹ This "triduum" does not harmonize exactly with the Gospel account, since there are between Good Friday afternoon and Easter Sunday morning not three times twenty-four, but only about forty hours. The expression "triduum" is well chosen with reference to the festival of Attis-Cybele,

wicked death should no longer have dominion over them. In order that their merits might no longer lie in endless hopelessness he broke open the eternal prison-house, and its iron doors fell down at the command of Christ. Then the earth trembled to its very foundations in the presence of the divinity of Christ, the sun sank into night before completing his daily course, and darkness covered the face of the earth. All the elements were agitated when Christ fought the fight against the tyranny of death. Three days this struggle lasted until the evil powers of death were conquered and broken. Then behold, after three days the dawn breaks more brightly than ever; the sun with dazzling rays pays homage to the almighty God, Christ; the beneficent divinity conquers and the host of the just and holy accompany his triumphal chariot. Then in exalted joy humanity exclaims: O death where is thy sting? The divine Saviour marching in front commands the opening of the gates of heaven: Open, open! Break the eternal seals! The God, Christ, has trodden death under foot and calls back to heaven the men whom death had taken captive! Forthwith the guardian of heaven recognize the Son of God; they see the spoils of the defeated enemy and recall the primal order, and they and all those rising to heaven cry together: Lift up the gates, ye gatekeepers, that the King of Glory may come in! The Father gives back to his returning son the scepter of the kingdom and concedes to him a throne of equal authority, in order that he may reign and rule in the eternal majesty of his divinity."

Græco-Roman legends also are familiar with many descents into hell and ascents into heaven. The descent into hell of Odysseus in Homer, and its development along the line of gradually growing vividness in the conceptions of the future life, was early followed in epic poetry by stories of similar journeys of other heroes,¹

where the joyful feast of the resurrection of the god followed the mournful ceremony for his death on the fourth day, that is, after three days. On the other hand, the Gospel reckoning corresponds to that of the festival of Osiris and Isis, where the mourning on the seventeenth of the month Athyr was followed by a jubilee on the nineteenth. Finally it should be observed that the New Testament Easter tradition itself hesitates between "on the third day" and "after three days,"—a very noticeable parallel!

as of Theseus, Peirithous, Orpheus, Heracles, Æneas, and Pythagoras. Primitive legend, poetic imagination and religious speculation had about equal share in the development of these legends. Most familiar of all is the descent into Hades of the mythical singer Orpheus, whom legend represented as a prophet, thaumaturgist and lustratory priest, and upon whose revelations the Orphic sect founded their occult doctrines and mysterious rites, which were intended by means of the recognition of its divine origin and by mystic rites and ascetic practices to release the soul shut up in its bodily prison, and to elevate it to immortal life.

In the writings attributed to Orpheus there are detailed descriptions of the other world, its punishments and rewards, as the hero is said to have seen them on his journey to Hades. Indeed in these Greek legends of the descent into Hades the chief concern was to obtain a knowledge of the affairs in the other world, which might serve incidentally to preserve the life of the initiated in that world, and not to enable him to overcome the powers of death directly. However, there may be found a beginning in this direction in the legend of Heracles who is said to have subdued Cerberus, the dog of Hades.

The ascents into heaven are found in various forms, partly as a final translation of a divine, or divinely favored, hero to the regions of perfect bliss, partly as a temporary elevation of a soul in a state of ecstasy, in which it gets an opportunity to see the stages and dangers of the way to heaven—a visionary prototype, followed further by the eschatological conception of the ascent into heaven of pious souls in general. Hebrew legend tells of but two “translations,” that of Enoch, who was “lifted up from the earth and translated unto God,” or “passed away,” and that of Elijah who went up to heaven in a fiery chariot.²

But in the Greek legends translations occur very frequently and in many different forms. to the Elysian fields, to the islands of the blest, to a cave, a mountain, the depths of the sea, or, finally,

¹ Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 278 ff.

² Gen. v. 24; Sirach xlv. 16, xlix. 14; Josephus, *Antiq.* I, 3, 4; 2 Kings ii. 11.

to the ideal heights of Olympus, the heaven of the gods.¹ Here the notion originally was that the entire man, body and soul, was transported directly into future bliss without having to pass through the gates of death. But later the sceptical came to consider the bodily ascension, as ancient legend had represented it in the case of Heracles and Romulus, no longer credible and accordingly restricted the transition to the incorporeal soul.

The legend of Heracles² is, moreover, of special and typical interest in several respects: He is the son of Zeus and a human mother, Alcmena; he has to contend all his life with the hostile destiny which the jealous Hera inflicted upon him; he demonstrates his divine power in great tasks and combats which consist for the most part in the conquest of hostile powers in both this world and the next (for instance that of the dog of Hades); in particular, he liberates Prometheus, the representative of curse-laden humanity, from the punishment inflicted upon him by the gods, his fetters, and the vulture that daily tore his flesh; finally he mounts the funeral pile of his own free will and is transported thence directly to the side of Zeus upon Olympus and becomes a sharer in the immortality of the gods through the draught of ambrosia. Nothing less than this seemed to the authors of the legend a worthy close to the life of such a divinely begotten hero who had expended it in struggles for the welfare of humanity.

But the mythical heroes of prehistoric times are not the only ones of whom has been told the legend of an ascension to heaven. It was transferred also to the great men of history, as was the legend of divine descent. "After divine honors had been paid to the kings and queens of the Macedonian Empire of the East, following the example of Alexander the Great himself, the fable ventured into the light that the divine monarch did not die at the close of his earthly existence, but had only been 'snatched away by the divinity,' and continued to live."³ Suetonius tells us of Cæsar

¹ Details on this subject are collected by Rohde, *Psyche*, 64 ff., 658 ff.

² Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 29 ff. Diodorus Sic., *Hist.*, IV, 8-30.

³ Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 663.

(*Julius*, 88) that he was placed among the number of gods after his death not merely by imperial decree, but in accordance with the conviction of the people, for during the games decreed in his honor by Augustus a comet appeared in the heavens for seven days, and this was regarded as the soul of Cæsar which had ascended into heaven. And likewise of the Emperor Augustus it was believed that he soared up to heaven from the pile that consumed his earthly remains. A prætor is even said to have testified under oath that he saw the image (the soul) of the Emperor flying up to heaven. (Sueton, *Octavius*, 100.)

Later at the funerals of the emperors an eagle was made to fly up from the funeral pile, which was supposed to bear the soul to heaven. That this was not simply fawning flattery, but that it corresponded to the superstition of the time is evident from the fact that similar things were told and believed regarding other remarkable men. When Peregrinus Proteus cast himself into the flames at Olympia, in order to follow his model, Heracles, even in this close of his life, a venerable old man asserted directly after that he had seen a vulture fly up to heaven out of the flames, and that he had met Peregrinus himself, transfigured and wearing a white garment, with the wreath of victory on his head. Soon after this he was worshipped as a god in his native city, and in his sanctuary it was believed that oracles were received and miraculous cures experienced.¹

So also concerning the end of the remarkable man, Apollonius of Tyana, various legends were circulated of his mysterious disappearance in the temple of Athena at Lindus, or in that of the Cictynna in Crete, and his biographer Philostratus (8, 31) finds a confirmation of his apotheosis in the fact that the grave of Apollonius is nowhere to be found on earth.

The notions of the ascension of a soul to heaven in a state of ecstasy, and of such ascension by souls of the departed in general, such as are found in Jewish and Orphic apocalypses, in Gnostic,

¹ According to the account of Lucian, which is also confirmed by Anaxagoras's *Defence of the Christians*, chap. 23.

Mandæan and Mithaic¹ liturgies, must be passed over here, being too remote from my theme. This would be a proper subject for a comparative treatment of the doctrines of the end of things (eschatology), which would be a very profitable task. On the other hand, essential features of the primitive Christian belief in Christ as lord and giver of life are found in the notion that his life was imparted to his followers through the belief in his name, in that of baptism in his name, and also in that of partaking of his flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper. Many parallels are found to these three points in the religious history of both Orient and Occident.

In the very instructive book by W. Heitmüller, *In the Name of Jesus* (an investigation into the New Testament on the lines of historical philology and religion, especially on primitive Christian baptism), there is to be found a vast collection of material on the theory and practice of the "belief in the name" in both Biblical and extra-Biblical religions. I must restrict myself here to giving a few specimens from this collection. In early religions the name is never a mere word or image, but has a very real value, standing in the closest mystical relation to the nature and destiny of the one who bears it, indeed, it is in some sort presented as an independent representative of his essence and effective power. A change of name signifies a regeneration of the person, his release from the destiny that clings to the old name. A curse that is pronounced upon the name of a person brings mischief to the person himself. One who knows and utters the name of any divinity or demon obtains a certain power over the being himself, which he can then use for good or evil purposes, for attack and defence, whence the use of the sacred or mysterious names in all sorts of sorcery.

On the other hand, the appeal to the name of a divinity brings the divinity himself near to the one who prays and establishes a mystic union between them, whereby the man who prays is charmed against maleficent powers. One who is "blessed in the name of Yahveh" gains the protecting power of this god and is

¹ Cp. Bousset, "Die Himmelsreise der Seele," in the *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, IV, Nos. 2 and 3. Dietrich, *Eine Mithras-Liturgie*, p. 179 ff.

under his especial guardianship. By "the name of the great gods" the messenger of the gods, Assusunamir, conjures the mistress of the underworld and compels her to release Istar. By means of the seal ring with the inscription of the cryptonym of darkness Hibil-Ziwa forces the passage through the gates of the underworld. By knowing and uttering the names of the spirit powers which control the gates of the celestial world the soul compels her admission on the journey to heaven.¹ By the name of his father and his mother the prince in the hymn of the soul in the Acts of Thomas² charmed the serpent and lulled it to sleep, and thus got possession of the pearl which it was guarding, which made possible his return from foreign parts (the world) to his heavenly home. By the acquisition of mysterious names the initiates in the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries attained the pledge of bliss in the world to come. In the Phrygian mysteries the priests bore the name of the god Attis in order to identify themselves with him. Thus we read in the Leiden charm-papyrus II³. "Thou art I and I am thou: whatever I say must come to pass, for I bear thy name as amulet in my heart; not all Styx, when roused, shall overcome me, nothing will oppose me, no spirit nor demon nor other mischief of Hades, for the sake of thy name which I have in my heart and which I call upon. Therefore hear me in everything, O gracious one; give me unassailable (i. e., proof against witchcraft) health, welfare, success, honor, victory, strength, amiability, hold in bound (invalidate) the (spellbinding) glances of all my adversaries, give me favor for all my undertakings!" Although this prayer comes from a charm-papyrus, nevertheless it may be regarded as a typical expression of the belief in the power exerted by names that was common to antiquity, with its mysticism and its magic. According to this belief, to "believe in a sacred (divine) name," is the same thing as bearing it in one's heart and thus being filled with the

¹ Cp. Origen's account of Orphian Gnosticism, c. *Cels.* VI, 30 ff., and the report of Hippolytus on the Gnosticism of the Naassenes (*Philosophumena*, V, 11 at top, and p. 67).

² Lipsius, *Apokryphe Apostelgeschichten*, I, 293.

³ Dietrich, *Abraxas*, 196. Heitmüller, *loc. cit.* 214.

supernatural powers which are represented by the being appealed to; to "call upon his name" is not an empty form of words, but the establishment of a real connection with this supernatural power whereby it is manifested and experienced in marvellous effects.

If we apply this thought to the Christian sphere, believing in the name of Jesus Christ and calling upon it signifies a mystical union with the nature of the son of God, the vanquisher of Satan and death, the miraculous saviour and lord of the world, and thereby an appropriation or absorption of all the vital forces peculiar to this being and proceeding from him. The mysticism and sorcery of the ancient belief in the power of a name is by no means eliminated here, but it does become the vessel for a higher content of spiritual experiences of truly ethico-religious value; it is, in brief ethically exalted.

The same is true of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, save that here there is added to the magic power of the name pronounced, as a supplementary means, the sacramental purifying and animating power of the water, which, by calling upon his name, is filled with its magic powers, like a storage battery charged with electric force. The view which is at the base of this is connected with the most elementary conceptions and usages of faith and worship among all nations. The myth of the descent of Istar into hell brings us near to the source of it: she went down in order to fetch the "water of life" to revive Tammuz. Being attacked in the underworld by sixty diseases, she is then, at the command of the queen of hell, sprinkled by the infernal water-nymphs with the water of life and is enabled to return again safe and sound to the world of the living; then Tammuz is recalled to life by being washed with the animating water. This was dramatically represented at the summer festival in the month of Tammuz (June or July), he lamenting women pouring water over the statue of Tammuz.

Just so at the feast of Adonis the image of the god, sometimes in human form, sometimes in the form of plants (Adonis), was thrown into the water in order to accomplish the revival of the god of fertility by this symbolic-magic performance. In the processions

of the Osiris festivals the water vessel was always carried ahead in honor of the god,¹ water being regarded in Egypt as an exhalation of Osiris, and accordingly a divine substance.

Upon this assumption are based all the widely recurring ceremonies of purification: the divine power inherent in the water serves to expel demons and their baneful poison. Among the Persians, for instance, the person who has become impure by touching a dead body is sprinkled with water to drive the devil out of him, the evil spirit gradually retiring from all the limbs of the body as they are touched by the water, escaping finally through the toes of the left foot.² Among the Greeks and Romans, too, all those who took part in a funeral were wont to purify themselves from the defilement by the use of consecrated water. But since sin and guilt, as well as disease and death, appeared from the primitive standpoint of animistic conceptions as a demoniac taint, the sprinkling with pure water taken from running springs was also regarded as a means of washing off sin and guilt.³ In the familiar verse,

"Ah, nimium faciles, qui tristia crimina cædis
Fluminea tolli posse putetis aqua!" (*Fasti*, II, 45),

Ovid ridicules this convenient manner of religious purification and expiation of guilt (which, however, does not come, as he thinks, from Greece alone, but was distributed equally over all countries).

As late as the third and fourth centuries we find in books of sorcery directions for purification which recommend as an effective spell against every evil of body or soul the waters from three or seven springs (in case of murder from fourteen springs).

But the same divine power of water which expels demons and counteracts their harmful influence, serves elsewhere to impart beneficent spiritual powers and to transport man into a condition of divine inspiration, of enthusiasm. Thus the Pythia, the priestess of the Delphic Apollo, was filled with the spirit of the god (ἐνθεος)

¹ Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, chap. 36. Further examples from popular customs are collected in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, II, 120-126.

² Chantepie de Saussaye, *Religionsgeschichte*, 2d ed., II, 191.

³ Rohde, *Psyche*, p. 361 ff.

by a draught from the Castalian fountain, and thus inspired to prophesy. In the initiations of the various mystery cults sacred ablutions were not merely the means of purification, but also of a rebirth, of securing a participation in the imperishable life of the god, of resurrection. According to Tertullian,¹ in the Eleusinian mysteries and in those of Isis and of Mithras the initiate was dipped into water as a means for the expiation of his sins and as a symbol of resurrection. This is confirmed for the mysteries of Isis by the description in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius (II, 21, 23): the act of consecration consisted in a symbolical pilgrimage to the land of the dead and a return to the light, a "rebirth for the course of a new salvation," whence the day of the consecration was called the "sacred birthday." The initiates of the mysteries of Mithras were said to be "born again forever." In the recently edited Mithras liturgy² the initiate prays: "If it has pleased you (gods) to surrender me to the birth unto immortality, in order that, after the present distress which so sorely besets me, I may behold the immortal primal cause with the immortal spirit and the immortal water, so that I may be regenerated through spirit and the holy spirit may move within me when I am purified and exempt from guilt by sacred ceremonies. . . . After this man, born from a mortal mother, has been begotten of thee anew to-day, being called into immortality from among so many thousands according to the counsel of the exceedingly good god, he strives and longs to worship thee to the best of human ability. Greetings to thee, O lord of the water, founder of the earth, master of the soul! Being born again, I perish by being exalted, and when I am exalted I die; born by the birth which brings forth life, I am ransomed through death and go the way which thou hast marked out according as thou hast established the law and founded the sacrament." As the editor of this liturgy remarks, this is the clearest and most thoroughgoing application of the figure of death and regeneration that we

¹*De baptismo*, 5, and *de praescript. haer.* 40: in the mysteries of Mithras an *imago resurrectionis* is represented.

² Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, pp. 5, 13, 15, 166.

have in any liturgical text of antiquity. It finds its closest analogy in the Pauline characterization of baptism as a symbolical participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. vi).

It is no wonder that this resemblance seemed to Tertullian and other early apologists so striking that they thought it could be explained only on the assumption of diabolical imitation of Christian usages. But in fact it is to be explained from the fundamental views common to animistic nature religions, and Tertullian himself reveals this most clearly in the manner in which he refers the virtue of baptism to the miraculous power inherent in water from the time of the creation, when the spirit of God brooded upon it, a power which could be restored and increased by calling upon the name of Christ: "With the increase of the mercy of God more virtue attached to water: that which had formerly cured bodily ills now restored the spirit, that which had accomplished temporal welfare now renewed unto eternal life."¹ That is to say, baptism is the fulfilment of the ancient rites of lustration infused with an ethical sense. . . How strong and how long the magical element persisted in the ceremonies of primitive Christian baptism is clearly shown by the custom of the church at Corinth, mentioned without condemnation by Paul, of receiving baptism for the benefit of deceased relatives, (1 Cor. xv. 29), to which a perfect parallel is offered in the Orphic intercession for the souls of sinful ancestors, and the "ransom and purification of living and dead" promised by Orphic priests through the rites of Dionysius.²

The same relation as between Christian baptism and the ancient rites of lustration exists between the Christian supper, or, according to Paul, Lord's Supper, and the ancient sacrificial meals, the ground thought of which is that partaking of sacred food brings the partaker into mystic communion with the life of the divinity.³

¹ Tert., *De baptismo*, 5. Cp. the same thoughts in the homilies of Clementin, 11, 22 ff., and among the Elkesaitic Gnostics, Epiphani., *Haer.* 53.

² Plato, *Rep.*, 2, 364; Rohde, *Psyche*, 420, f.

³ Cp. Robertson Smith. *The Religion of the Semites*, translated into German by Stübe, p. 239 (of the translation).

This too can be traced back to primitive Babylonian myths.¹ Ea's son Adapa had been endowed by his father with extraordinary wisdom, indeed, but not with eternal life. He might have obtained this also and thus have attained to entire equality with the gods if he had accepted the "food of life" and the "water of life" which were offered to him by Anu, the god of the sky. But because he refused to partake in this divine food, on the advice of the (suspicious or jealous?) Ea, he cast away forever his chance of immortal life (just as our first parents in the Bible did, because, on the advice of the serpent they laid hands upon the fruit of the tree of knowledge and were expelled from Paradise for so doing). According to this conception, then, the possession of immortal life depends upon partaking of the celestial bread of life which is peculiar to the divinity and under certain circumstances is shared with his favorites. By partaking of the food of the gods, nectar and ambrosia, Heracles was accepted into the company of the immortal gods of Olympus, while, on the other hand, Persephone, by partaking of the fruit of the underworld, is bound to remain there.

From the earliest times the religious rites of all peoples have embraced the eating of consecrated food, which not only represents the life of the divinity, but also contains it in some mysterious fashion. Upon this is based the sacramental significance of sacrificial meals: they establish a holy communion with the life of the divinity, which is contained in the flesh and blood of the sacrificial animal—itself an incarnation of the nature god—and which is accordingly appropriated by the one who partakes of it.

Thus in the worship of Dionysius a bull, who was regarded as the incarnation of the god of fertility, was torn to pieces by the teeth of the devotees, and the flesh eaten raw,² in order to transfer the divine life of the god to those who took part in the ceremony by this symbolical repetition of the sacrifice of the god himself. But instead of the real flesh the sacramental meal consisted only

¹ Schrader-Zimmermann, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, p. 520 ff.

² Cp. the quotations already cited, p. 678, note 3.

of a substitute in the form of bread baked in the shape of the sacrificial animal.¹ Similar substitutes for the earlier sacrificial flesh seem to have been customary under manyfold forms in the later mysteries. Thus, for instance, in the mysteries of Attis the initiate, before being admitted into the innermost sanctuary, declared by eating from the drum and drinking from the cymbal that he had become a devotee of Attis. We do not know the nature of the food and drink which were partaken of from the ritual vessels of the priest of Cybele, but that it was a sacramental eating and drinking, which was to give to the initiate a means for attaining eternal life, is clearly to be inferred from the polemic remarks added by Firmicus Maternus, who reports it to us:² "Unhappy man! Thou hast swallowed poison and drunken the draught of death! It is a very different food that gives life and salvation, refreshes the languishing, recalls the wandering, raises up the fallen, and gives to the dying the symbols of eternal immortality: seek the bread and the cup of Christ to fill the human substance with immortal essence!"

This contrast is notable from two different points of view: it shows, on the one hand, that the fundamental conception is the same in both cases, that the sacramental eating and drinking is "a remedy for death and recipe for immortality" (as Ignatius, *Ad Eph.*, 20, 2, formulated the church view of the Lord's Supper, which also finds pronounced expression in John vi. 51-59). On the other hand, it shows that the Christian sacrament also works as an ethical remedy for the erring and the fallen; the background of magic remains the same but is transformed ethically in the Christian spirit. This is accomplished in the Gospel of John by the addition of verse 63 to the theory of the sacrament which preceded.

Among the mysteries of Mithras also there was celebrated, along with the sacred lustration and the marking of the forehead

¹ Many details of this sort from ancient and modern times (popular customs) are collected in Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, II, 260-300.

² *De errore prof. relig.*, chap. 18.

with the symbol of the covenant,¹ a holy meal of which only the initiates of the higher degrees were permitted to partake. It was regarded as an imitation of the meal in which, according to the legend, Mithras himself had once sealed his compact with the sun-god Helios. Upon a relief of sculpture which is still preserved² we may see the two gods sitting together in the middle on cushions, each holding a cup in his right hand, before them a table with four small loaves of bread, each marked with a cross. On either side stand the initiates, their faces covered with masks that represent the nature of Mithras under various attributes—that is, they have “put on” the god in order to bring themselves into mystical communion with him. (Cp. Gal. iii. 27, “put on Christ.”)

Concerning the meal of Mithras, Justin (*Apol.* I, 66) tells us that “bread and a cup of water are served and certain blessings spoken,” and Tertullian³ speaks of an offering of bread and of an image of the resurrection, while both apologists considered this a diabolical imitation of the Christian sacrament, partly overlooking the unquestioned priority of the pagan mysteries as compared with the Christian, partly explaining it as due to prophetic anticipation on the part of the demons. It is a remarkable coincidence, that, with regard to the contents of the cup of Mithras, whether it was only water or perhaps wine, the same uncertainty prevails as concerning the original cup in the Christian sacrament, which certainly did not always contain wine, since wine is nowhere mentioned in connection with the earliest Christian love-feasts in the Acts of the Apostles.⁴ But in the church at Corinth, according to 1 Cor. xi. 21, the celebration with wine had become customary. This gave to the

¹ Whether a brand or an anointing with oil, is uncertain. Cp. Revelation xiii. 16 f., xiv. 9, “the mark of the beast on brow or hand”; is this perhaps a reference to the symbol of Mithras? And in xiv. 10 also, might not the “cup of the wine of the wrath of God, poured out without mixture” contain an allusion to the cup of Mithras?

² Cumont, *Textes et monuments relat. aux mystères de Mithra*, I, 157 f.

³ *De praes. haer.*, 40: “Mithras signat in frontibus milites suos, celebrat et panis oblationem et imaginem resurrectionis inducit.”

⁴ Cp. on this question: Harnack, “Brot und Wasser, die eucharistischen Elemente by Justin,” in *Texten und Unters.*, VII, 1892.

apostle Paul (who moreover never speaks of "wine" but always of the "cup") the welcome occasion for a mystical interpretation of the Lord's Supper as a communion, not only with the body, but also with the blood of Christ. (1 Cor. x. 16.)

It is true, no parallel for this symbolism of blood is found in the meal of Mithras, but it is found in the baptism of blood of the bull and ram sacrifices connected with the mysteries of Cybele, and perhaps also with those of Mithras. This sacrifice of a ram or a bull, adopted into the worship of Mithras, received in that religion probably the significance of a sacramental imitation of the sacrifice of the bull, once performed by Mithras himself for the salvation of the world, and represented in all the pictures of the ceremonies. Here the bull was very likely thought of as the incarnation of the god himself, as was certainly the case in the worship of Dionysius. The one who was to be initiated allowed the blood of the slaughtered bull or ram to drip upon him,¹ and this blood baptism served him as a sacramental means for obtaining participation in the life and death of the god. The thought of purification and regeneration through the sacramental symbol of death, which according to the above quoted liturgy, was a fundamental thought of the religion of Mithras, received very drastic expression in this baptism of blood. We may recall in this connection the Christian doctrine of purification and cleansing "in the blood of the lamb."² (Rev. vii. 14.)

v.

CHRIST AS KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

This apocalyptic name of Christ (Rev. xix. 16) indicates the dignity and power which belong to him in the belief of the early Christian communion. It comprises: (1) Lordship over the communion of the faithful, whose "head" Christ is as the saviour who

¹ Prudentius, *Peristephanon*, X, v. 1008-1050.

² In the expression peculiar to the Apocalypse of John: το ἀρνίον το ἑσφαγμένον, there is a probable connection with the Phrygian sacrifice of the ram.

established and insured their salvation, as the lawgiver whose will is the guide of their lives, and as the judge who will one day reward each one according to his works; (2) Lordship over the world as the mediator and agent of its creation, government and completion.

With this may be compared the following parallels from the various religious systems. The belief of the Buddhist communion in the supremacy of their founder is expressed in the most extravagant attributes¹: He is called the joy of the whole world, the help of the helpless, a mine of mercy, god of gods, Brahma of Brahmas, the only saviour, the truly compassionate, the royal preacher who dispenses the ambrosia of justice, the father, helper, friend, treasure, jewel of the world; stronger than the strongest, more merciful than the most merciful, fairer than the fairest, more meritorious than the most meritorious, mightier than the mightiest; who grants salvation to every being that merely utters his name or gives even a handful of rice as alms in his name; eye cannot see, ear cannot hear, mind cannot conceive anything more glorious and more adorable than Buddha.

To this may be added a few hymns from Chapter 23 of the *Laudations of the Lalitavistara*: "In the world of beings which had long been tormented by the ills of natural depravity, didst thou appear, king of physicians, who dost save us from all evils. Upon thy arrival, O leader, anxiety disappears, and men and gods are filled with satisfaction. Thou art the protector, the firm foundation, the head, the guide of the world with thy gentle, benevolent spirit; thou art the best of physicians, who dost bring the perfect panacea and heal suffering for a certainty. Eminent for thy compassion and sympathy, thou dost order the affairs of the world; eminent for thy severe morality and thy good works, acting independently, perfectly pure, thou hast attained perfection, and being saved thyself, thou wilt, as the annunciator of the four truths, save other creatures also. The power of the evil being has been overcome by wisdom, courage and gentleness; thou hast attained supreme and undying honor; we greet thee as the conqueror of the legions of the liar

¹ Collected in Hardy's *Manual of Buddhism*, p. 360.

(Cp. John viii. 44). Thou, whose word is infallible and who, free from error and passion, hast trodden the path of eternal life, dost deserve in heaven and upon earth honor and homage beyond compare. Thou quickenest gods and men by thy exceeding clear words, by the rays of light which proceed from thee art thou the conqueror of this universe, lord of gods and men. Thou didst appear, light of the law, destroyer of unhappiness and ignorance, completely filled with humility and majesty; sun, moon, and fire are without light in contrast with thee and the imperishable splendor of thy perfection. Thou who dost teach us to know what is true and what is false, spiritual guide with sweetest voice, thou whose soul is calm, whose senses are subdued, whose heart is perfectly at rest, who dost teach what should be taught, who dost instruct the assembly of gods and men: I greet thee, Sakyamuni, as the greatest of men, as the wonder of the thousand worlds, to whom are due honor and homage in heaven and on earth, from gods and from men!"

Finally I add the prayer of a pious believer in Buddha¹ who was obliged to flee from his home in the eleventh century A. D. on account of his faith: "Whether I dwell in heaven or in hell, in the city of spirits or of men, let my soul be planted firmly upon thee, for there is no other happiness for me. Thou art my father and my mother, my brother and my sister, thou art my faithful friend in dangers. O my beloved, thou art my lord, my teacher, who dost give me wisdom that is sweet as nectar. Thou art my wealth, my joy, my delight, my greatness, my boast, my knowledge and my life, thou art my all, O all-knowing Buddha!"

When the pious believer lifts his soul in such ardent prayer to the object of his faith—it matters not under what name—reason hesitates to come forward with the dry question, whether Buddha, who has entered into Nirvana, still exists, and whether he is omnipresent and omniscient to hear the prayers of the faithful. The

¹ According to the *Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic society of Bengal*, Feb. 1890, p. 127. I am indebted for this quotation to Professor Carpenter of Oxford.

historical founder of their faith is for the Buddhist indeed only the temporal and transient manifestation of the eternal spirit of wisdom and goodness, who has come not merely once, but will forever continue to come in visible human form to carry on the work of salvation for mankind who will forever be in need of it. It is this eternal spirit of salvation then, which is the real object of the Buddhist belief in salvation, while the historical founder of the faith, as the most prominent of the manifestations of that spirit until now, is the immediate and tangible image in which the invisible spirit becomes concrete for the worshipping eye of faith in his followers.

And since Buddhism finds the desirable end of the individual life in general, and accordingly of its founder also, in "Nirvana," meaning either complete dissolution or at least completely inactive calm and blessedness, therefore the historical founder cannot be conceived with the same dogmatic positiveness as in the case of Christianity to be the enthroned lord who is eternally ruling his followers in the exercise of divine authority. Nevertheless, in Buddhism too he is practically, in the worship of the faithful, the ever and everywhere present object of their confiding love. Whence it becomes clearly evident that here as everywhere it is simply the psychological demand of faith for a human manifestation of the eternal which led naturally to some sort of apotheosis of the historical saviour. To faith it is just as natural to combine the finite human person with the eternal principle of the spirit as it is inevitable to the thinking mind to distinguish the two from each other clearly and sharply. From the crossing of these two tendencies results the diagonal of the parallelogram of forces, the dogmatic figure of a miraculous god-man.

From the mythology of polytheistic religions, too, many parallels to the kingship of Christ may be cited. Marduk, the city god of Babylon, first-born son of Ea, was called the "lord of lords and king of kings," because he accomplished the conquest of chaos and the creation of the world, and because he controls the destinies of earthly kings. This last function is also ascribed to Nabu, the bearer and writer of the celestial tablets of fate, who is also called

"king and lord of the gods of heaven and earth";¹ he was perhaps originally identical with Marduk, and was distinguished from him later as the celestial scribe, patron of wisdom and oracles, the Babylonian Hermes and Thot.

In Egypt after the foundation of the new Theban kingdom the city god of Thebes, Ammon-Ra, was worshipped as the hidden creator, "the lord of the thrones of earth and king of the gods," uniting in himself all the qualities and powers of the other gods. But the judge in the realm of the dead is Osiris, beside whom is stationed as divine scribe, Thot, who, as god of the wonder-working word, shared also in the creation of the world and became the patron of wisdom, of oracles, and of magic, in some measure a personification of the divine word of revelation, or Logos.

In the Persian religion² Ahura-Mazda, the wise lord, is the creator, sustainer, and guardian of the world; with him are associated as personifications of his two chief attributes, wisdom and justice, the spirits Vohu mano, "the good thought" (Logos), the first-created of good spirits, mediator of creation and of the revelation of the law, and gatekeeper of heaven, and Asha vahista, the spirit of justice, guardian of the cosmic order and mediator of the cosmic government, executor of the court of rewards and punishments in the next world. Along with these are also Sraosha the pure and victorious hero, conqueror of the demons, guide of souls, and judge in the world to come, who also plays a decisive part in the last crucial combat at the end of the world; and last of all Mithras, the friendly god of light and truth, the foe of the demons and champion of the faithful, the judge of souls in the underworld, of whom it is said in an ancient hymn that Ahura-Mazda created him just as great and adorable as himself, that is, that he occupies a place in the rites of worship equal to that of the supreme god.

¹ Schrader-Zimmern, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, pp. 374 and 402.

² Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Religionsgeschichte*, II, 173 ff. Cumont, *Textes et monuments relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, I, 240 ff. Böcklen, *Verwandschaft der jüdisch-christlichen mit der persischen Eschatologie*, p. 48 ff.

As this very "mediator," who stands nearer to men, Mithras was halfway identified in the Perso-Babylonian-Phrygian hybrid religion with the sun-god and worshipped in the rites of the mysteries as the special saviour of the initiated. Legend represents him as performing a mediatorial part even in the creation of the world, producing the germs of all life in plant and animal by the sacrifice of the cosmogonic bull. But then again he is the perpetual mediator of all salvation for his devotees in this world and the next, exemplar and helper in their conflict against all the powers opposed to the divine will, guide and guardian of the souls of the pious on their perilous journey to the upper realms of heaven. But at the end of things he will bring about the renewal of the world by a repetition of the sacrifice of the cosmogonic bull, will raise all the dead and prepare for the just the lifegiving drink of immortality.

In the worship of the believers in Mithras Sunday was observed as the sacred day of the sun-god, and the annual chief festival was the celebration of the victoriously rising sun at the winter-solstice; the 25th of December was the birthday of the *sol invictus* of the Mithras religion long before it became the birthday of the Christian saviour. How fervently the relation to the god of their salvation was conceived and felt we may see in the liturgy already cited above, from which these additional hymns may be quoted:¹

"Greetings to thee, O lord, most mighty, most powerful king, greatest of the gods, Helios, lord of heaven and earth, god of gods; mighty is thy breath, mighty is thy power; lord, if it pleases thee, present me to the supreme god who begot and fashioned thee!" And then the person who is himself lifted up into the presence of Mithras, speaks: "Lord of my life, remain with me in my soul; leave me not! I greet thee, lord, ruler of the water, founder of the earth, master of the soul! Lord, being lifted up I depart as one born again, etc." (Cp. *ante*, p. 689.)

While the saviour divinities of the mysteries, such as Mithras and Serapis, were credited by their worshippers with unlimited dominion over the world of nature and spirit—since otherwise they

¹ Dietrich, *Eine Mithraliturgie*, pp. 11 and 15.

would not be able to protect their devotees—yet the manifestation of this power was looked for only in the guidance of the destinies of the individual worshippers in this world and the next. On the other hand, we miss here the social-ethical ideal of the regeneration and conquest of earthly humanity by the victorious power of the heavenly lord. This ideal was peculiar to the Jewish Messiah belief, at first, indeed, with the limitation to a period of earthly salvation for the Jewish people, but with a tendency, becoming ever stronger in the later apocalyptic writers, to extend these national limits to a universal kingdom of God embracing the entire human race.

In this broadened form, for which Hellenism had paved the way, the social ideal of a kingdom of God to be realized on a regenerated earth, was assimilated by the early Christian faith, assuring to it from the beginning its unqualified superiority over the belief of the various mystery-cults in their saving divinities. The belief of the Church in the kingship of Christ united in itself the two ideals of religious hope and longing: the guarantee of the perfection and blessedness of the individual life, such as was promised to the faithful by Buddhism and the Oriental-Greek mysteries, and the social-ethical regeneration and transformation of mundane humanity into an ideal state of God, such as was the hope of Jewish-Hellenistic faith.

It is self-evident that the heavenly lord, who guaranteed to his worshippers the fulfilment of this double ideal, was from the beginning destined and qualified for the conquest of all other lords and for the sole dominion over the world. His most serious rival was not, however, Mithras, but the Roman emperor, the occupant of the *imperium* in the earthly world. For the personal needs of the pious soul individual pagans might find a certain satisfaction in the rites of their mysteries; but here the no less mighty longing of the nations for a new social order, in which justice, peace, and goodness should prevail, found no satisfaction and clung with so much the more persistent, though ever disappointed, hope to the earthly gods on the throne of the Cæsars. In an inscription recently discovered at Priene, coming probably from the year 9 B. C., oc-

curs this hymn to Emperor Augustus¹: "This day (the birthday of Augustus) has given the whole world a new aspect; it would have gone to ruin had not a common happiness dawned for all men in him who was born this day. Well does he judge who sees for himself in this birthday the beginning of life and of all life's powers; at least the time is past when one must needs regret being born. For the blessing of all men, the providence which rules over everything in life has endowed this man with such gifts that he is sent to us and coming generations as a saviour; he will put an end to all warfare and will gloriously develop all things. In his coming the hopes of them of old are fulfilled; he has not only excelled all the former benefactors of mankind, but it is impossible that a greater should ever come. The birthday of the god has brought with it the good tidings ("Gospels") naturally connected with it. A new era must begin with his birth."

A similar inscription comes from Halicarnassus:² "That our life may be joyful the divinity has brought to mankind Cæsar Augustus who is the father of his fatherland, divine Rome, but also the paternal Zeus and saviour of the human race, whose foresight has fulfilled and surpassed the prayers of all. For land and sea are blessed with peace, the cities flourish in harmony and wealth, and every good thing is to be had in abundance."

Finally, a certain connection of the Mithras faith with the belief in the emperor is to be detected in the address of the Armenian king Tiridates, who had come to Rome in company with magi, to Emperor Nero:³ "I am thy servant, my lord; I have come to thee, my God, to worship thee even as I do Mithras."

We see from these evidences that the belief in a human in-

¹ Edited by Mommsen and Wilamowitz in the German Archæological Institute, XXIII, No. 3, translated and discussed by Harnack in the *Christliche Welt*, 1899, No. 51.

² In the British Museum, No. 994, according to Harnack's report in the *Christliche Welt*, *ibid.*

³ *Dio Cassius*, ed. Becker, II, p. 253. Suetonius, *Nero*, 13 and 30. According to the attractive conjecture of Dietrich (*Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, III, 1 ff.) this historical fact is the basis of the Gospel legend of the homage of the Wise Men before the newborn king of the Jews (Matt. ii).

carnation of the divinity in the Roman emperor and in a divinity worshipped in the mysteries, who brought salvation for the next world, not only existed side by side in Asia Minor, but that they tended to some sort of union. But this tendency, which is so easily understood from a psychological point of view, could never be fulfilled on pagan soil because of the basic difference in the respective objects of worship.

The conception of a saviour-god who was to guarantee not only the salvation of the individual soul in the next world but also an earthly kingdom of prosperity and peace, was already present in the dreams and longings of the nations at the beginning of our era; the only question was whence the certainty of his realization should come. The church received the answer to this question in the belief in Christ, which combined the Messiah-king of the earthly kingdom of God with the mystical conqueror of death and mediator of life into a single personality in the ideal figure of the eternal son of God who within the bounds of time became a man, died, descended into hell, subdued death and the devil, arose triumphant and ascended into heaven where he sits as a ruler of the world at the right hand of God, and will come again, upon the clouds of heaven, to judge the quick and the dead. All of these dogmas are found, indeed, here and there in the religious worship of dying antiquity, in Orient and Occident, in the manifold forms of the Jewish apocalyptic writings, of Oriental mysticism and gnosticism, of Greek speculation and Roman emperor-worship: the one thing lacking was a single subject to constitute the synthesis of these qualities, the center of crystallization about which this chaotic and fermenting mass of religious ideas might take shape in a new world of faith and hope which should comprehend both the next world and this. This central point was given in the person of Jesus, the Galilean tribal saviour and king of the Jews, who by way of the cross became the saviour of the world and king of the all-embracing kingdom of God.

CONCLUSION.

One who surveys this mass of parallels between the belief in Christ held by the primitive Christians and the religious ideas of the surrounding world, can scarcely avoid the impression that Christianity cannot have fallen from the skies as something absolutely new and unique, but that it developed out of the historically prepared soil of the contemporary world as the fruit of the evolution of thousands of years.

Now it is conceivable from the psychological standpoint that this new and evolutionary view has upon many, both conservatives and radicals, such a startling effect that they forthwith draw from it the most extreme conclusions, thinking that Christianity is thereby deprived of all peculiar character and permanent value, because it seems to them to be merely a collection of ideas which had been known long before and which have become altogether antiquated for us. But this would be a very hasty conclusion, involving many errors, exaggerations and onesided judgments which careful investigation in religious history might regard as its office to reveal and refute. I would only wish to indulge in a few hints in this direction at the present moment.

Before all else we should guard against the frequent and widespread confusion between the inner kinship of religious conceptions and their outward historical relationship. It is entirely unpermissible to infer the latter from the mere existence of the former; such a procedure overlooks the fact that kinship of conceptions is not necessarily to be explained by borrowing and transference from one sphere to another; but on the contrary, from similar psychological reasons and similar social conditions, like conceptions may arise in different places quite independently of one another, and have certainly thus arisen in vast numbers of cases. Accordingly, when similar conceptions are proven to exist, we should first inquire carefully whether their similarity may be explained as the result of similar conditions, or whether perchance some close or remote historical connection is with any probability to be assumed as existing between them. And in the answering of this question, in

view of the present status of archæology and ethnology, the greatest caution is everywhere to be urgently recommended.

An historical connection, whether direct or indirect, is to be assumed with considerable probability only in those cases where the resemblance consists not merely in a general conception or an accidental similarity of sound, but where it involves very definite details. In the preceding pages many instances of this kind may be found; I recall the similarities between the Buddhist and the Lucanian stories of the infancy of the hero: supernatural birth, the song of praise of the heavenly hosts, apparitions of light, the prophecy of a pious seer, the adoration of the wise men, and the parallel to the story of the twelve-year old Jesus in the temple (*Monist*, XIV, 3, pp. 336-38) and also the parallel between the Indian Krishna legend and the account in Matthew of the persecution of the infant Jesus by Herod and the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem, (*ibid.* p. 344), and again, the parallels of the Christian stories of the temptation of Jesus (*ibid.* p. 340-41), or again, the dating of the resurrection "on the third day" in the Egyptian worship of Osiris, or "after three days" in the rites of the Phrygian Attis (*ante* p. 681), the parallel of the apocalyptic purification by the blood of the lamb and the Phrygian purification by the sacrificial blood of the ram (*ante*, pp. 693-694), the Mithras sacrament of bread and wine, the sign upon the brow, the celebration of Sunday and of the 25th of December as the birthday of the god (*ante*, pp. 692 ff., 699). With such individual details at least the possibility of historical influence is to be conceded and to some extent its probability presumed.

On the other hand it would certainly not be warranted to derive the general notion of the divine sonship of Christ historically from a certain pre-Christian legend. In some sense or other this thought was common property among religious men in ancient times, and accordingly must find its ultimate ground in the depths of the universal religious consciousness, in the feeling natural to men, that "we are of divine origin," a feeling which was aroused everywhere by the sight of extraordinary gifts and achievements on the part of individual men, and which accordingly attached itself to these elect heroes of human knowledge and power as the

representatives and guarantors of our universal kinship with God. And the double form in which the conception of divine sonship is found, without as well as within Christianity, that of the apotheosis of man and that of the incarnation of the godhead, can easily be explained on a psychological basis from the two equally true points of view: On the one hand the divine sonship, meaning the resemblance to God, appears as the desirable ideal and goal of human destiny; on the other hand the attainableness of this ideal presumes supernatural reality existent from the beginning, a divine capacity and essential tendency which can be comprehended only as the result of an inborn divine spirit.

Furthermore, the thought of the god-man who dies and is resurrected and ascends to heaven found its parallels in pagan religions, with roots reaching back into the most primitive conceptions of animistic nature religion, the annual death and resurrection of the divine vitality in nature. But the Christian myth is not to be derived from these nature myths, because it had its immediate origin in the historical facts of the death of Jesus and of the following Easter visions of his disciples. Nevertheless, these parallels may be regarded as important in so far as they remind us that the religious interpretation of those historical facts in the mind of the primitive Christian community did not rest upon whim or chance but was the expression of the same eternal cosmic law the truth of which has impressed itself upon mankind from the beginning: that the seed must die in order to bring forth fruit, and that the son of man must suffer in order to enter into his glory (John xii. 24 ff., Luke xxiv. 25). The dominant motive of the Christian drama of salvation, "Through death to life," has some sort of archetype in the myths and rites of many religions, and by this very fact shows itself to be one of the elementary and fundamental truths which, while not uttered for the first time in the Christian religion, are after all revealed there in their purest, because ethical and spiritual, form.

And this leads us to another exceedingly important point for comparative religion. The mistake is frequently made in the comparison of two religions, while busied with the similarities, of ig-

noring the differences, or of so underestimating them that the higher of the two seems almost brought down to the level of the lower.¹ This affords a perfect historical companion-piece to the abuse by natural scientists of the theory of evolution, placing man upon a plane with the ape as a not essentially different variety of this species. Such aberrations contribute much to discredit the just claims of the notion of evolution. But the theory is not to blame for these perversions of it, but only its onesided and superficial application by many empiricists who seem to be entirely ignorant of the fact that every new stage of development rests upon a "creative synthesis," which does not simply combine the old elements in a mechanical fashion, but completely reshapes them, subjecting them to a new and dominant law, so that the new outcome is in fact something entirely different from the sum of its former elements. This general observation finds its most brilliant confirmation precisely here, in the relation of Christianity to earlier religions, from which it developed as their higher unity and purer truth.

Primitive Christianity transformed the Jesus of history into the Jesus of faith by giving the objective form of an independent Christ spirit to the impression it received from his life and death, after the manner of ancient "animism." It fused into one this incorporate spirit with the celestial son of man found in the apocalypses and the son of God and Logos of gnosticism, and then represented this supermundane celestial spirit as descending upon earth, becoming man, dying, returning to heaven and ruling there as co-equal regent with God until his return for the last judgment. In this human-divine drama of salvation the Christian faith had taken on a form of expression that was the better fitted to subdue paganism the closer its formal relation with the myths of paganism. But in this process who could fail to see that the old forms had been made a vessel for an essentially new content, and had thus received a much deeper religious meaning and a much purer ethical significance than they had ever had before? All of the phantas-

¹ I would cite the familiar Babel and Bible Lectures of Delitzsch, which have received their most adequate criticism in Gunkel's pamphlet, *Babylon and the Religion of Israel*, 1903.

tic spirits, gods and heroes of the nature religions, as well as the earthly gods on the throne of the Cæsars, sank into nothingness in comparison with the one lord, Christ, who thenceforth was regarded as the Spirit pre-eminently (1 Cor. iii. 17), because in his nature faith saw combined all that which had been called into life in the soul of the believer by the influence of the personality of Jesus, and all the new life which the believer recognized as actual and efficient in himself and as coming from God.

Even though this belief in the god-spirit Christ clothed itself again in the garment of the old myths and found its sacramental expression in forms of worship similar to their rites, nevertheless, in content and essence this Christian faith was something entirely different, for its dominant principle, to which the old forms were subjected, was no longer the alternation of life and death in nature but the ethical ideal of holy love recognized in the life and death of Jesus, which has compassion on the weary and heavy laden, which seeks its greatness not in ruling but in serving, and sacrifices life for the cause of God and of its brethren. This ideal was not merely devised, like the ethical ideals of the Stoics, the Platonists, and the Pythagoreans, which were devised by sages for sages, and were accordingly always problematical and never efficient among the people; on the contrary, it had appeared as an actuality in the life and death of a divinely inspired prophet and friend of the people. From his words and works, and most of all from his death, it appealed to the reason and heart of all without distinction, to children and philosophers, to low and high, to sinful and righteous. Moreover, its inspiring power was not extinguished with the death of the master, but it never let go of the souls of his followers, continuing to work in them as the indissoluble bond which kept them united to him and to one another, and assured them of his continued life for their benefit in the communion of the saints.

At bottom it was perfectly natural that this ideal, which had been seen as a reality in the historical man, Jesus, was personified by the faith of the early Church in a supermundane celestial being and son of God. It was not only consistent with the animistic thought of antiquity, according to which states of consciousness in

general and lively spiritual emotions in particular were given objective form as spiritual beings and explained as the influences of these on and in men, but there is in this procedure a permanent essence of truth, if only we are able to translate the early animistic-mythical language into the psychological and abstract language of to-day. No one will deny that every ideal is a transcendent quantity to which no single historical phenomenon is equivalent. Now love, which overcomes the demon of selfishness, which lifts the individual out of the narrow bounds of his particular interests, and in society transforms the natural struggle for existence into the ethical solidarity of all—should not this love be conceived rightfully as a supernatural power, as a revelation of the all-uniting spirit of God in the souls of men, just as the force of gravitation in the physical world is such a revelation?

Kant, it is remembered, recognized the revelation of God in the laws of the heavenly bodies and in the law of righteousness within the breast of man; now love is the fulfilling of the law, changing the challenging commandment into the heart's free impulse and efficient power. Why then should we not be permitted to recognize in love the "incarnation of the divine Logos," which not only has taken place, but continues to take place wherever love unites the hearts of men and consecrates society into a kingdom of God? And since love in its highest manifestation, the sacrifice of the individual self for the common welfare, is confident that she does not lose her own self but really gains it for the first time (Mark viii. 35), then in fact the divinely-human act of love's sacrifice in the service of her brethren must be the way to eternal life. And so the drama of salvation, with its guiding motive, "Through death to life! Die to live!" is giving representative expression to an eternal truth of the moral order of the universe.

The question might further be raised, why it was not possible to represent this ethical ideal directly as such without the veils of myth, in the teaching and example of Jesus, that is, why the Jesus of history instead of the Christ of faith could not become the subject of the Gospel proclamation. Two answers may be given. First, in the pagan world the Gospel proclamation had to adapt

itself to the prevalent mode of thought—which was the mythical—in order to be understood by it; it could conquer the myths and rites of nature religion only by dressing the new ethical ideal substance in those forms already given and thus transforming them from within. And secondly, we must not forget that the historical Jesus, even though he was the first to be mightily inspired by the new spirit of love and divine sonship, and gave the chief initiative to the awakening and control of this spirit in mankind, was after all not simply identical with this ideal principle. That is inherently impossible, because a principle or ideal can never be identical with an individual phenomenon in time and space but is always far broader than all such.

And this is confirmed by a thoughtful glance at the reports of the Gospels, which show us Jesus as a child of his time and of his people, submissive to the law of Moses, sharing the Messianic hopes of his race, and especially, in accord with the apocalyptic mood of his contemporaries, expecting the early end of the present world and the marvellous coming of a new one. It was this apocalyptic mood which stamped upon his ethical demands their deep earnestness and also their ascetic-eschatological spurning of the "world." Now it is simply self-evident that neither that side of Jesus's thought which is attached to his national laws, nor that which connects with apocalyptic asceticism could become an object of religious faith and ethical observance for all peoples and all times. Accordingly it was an inevitable necessity that the universally valid and eternal ideal content, the real saving principle, should be separated from these individual and transient limitations of his personality and fixed in a supermundane form. Now what other form could this have been than the symbolical language of myth, of religious poetry, in which at all times the imagination has clothed the world of the divine and the eternal, under the sensual but yet supersensual figures and actions of miracle and legend?

The liberation of the Christian idea from the stubborn fetters of Judaism was possible only at the cost of arraying it in the mutable forms of myth and cult. While to be sure these were often closely connected with the ancient forms of nature religions, on the other

hand they had the great advantage of being independent of that historical restriction which is inseparable from the Jewish religion or from any other religion of laws and codes. It is true, the myths removed the divine activities into the past, but it was an indefinite and fluctuant past, which, in the rites that interpreted the myth, was completely transformed into a timeless present, the symbolical repetition of the mythical story representing it as an ever renewed activity. Even such was the significance which the sacraments had for the early Church: they served to obliterate the temporary form of the myth of salvation by giving under symbolical forms an ever-present realization of the eternal spiritual truth hidden within it, the perpetual incarnation of God in the hearts of the faithful believers and the perpetual thank offering of the believing congregation brought to God in obedience and love.¹

Hence myths and rites were the most suitable expression for primitive Christian faith. But they still have many lessons for us also. They show us how we should allow history to guide us out beyond and above history to the eternal and everpresent God, who is a God of the living and not of the dead; they admonish us to free ourselves from the baneful spell of the historical letter, which looks for the revelation of God only in the documents of a dead past and, absorbed in this, forgets to see him in the living present. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; he is arisen! But go to your brethren; there ye shall see him." We shall see the living spirit of Christ, this divine principle planted forever in mankind, wherever the spirits of men are open to the recognition of all truth, wherever hearts glow for all goodness, wherever love brings the daily sacrifice of its own self for the common welfare, wherever men struggle and suffer for right and justice in society, wherever they believe in the perpetual coming of the kingdom of God among us, and where in this sign the world is vanquished.

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OTTO PFLEIDERER.

¹ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, X, 6, 20: Hoc est sacrificium Christianorum: multi unum corpus in Christo. Hoc etiam sacramento altaris frequentat ecclesia, quod in ea re, quam offert, ipsa offeretur... quæ, cum ipsius capitis corpus sit, se ipsam per ipsum offerre discit. Huic summo veroque sacrificia cuncta sacrificia falsa cesserunt.